

CHAKRAVARTHI V. NARASIMHAN

The Mahābhārata

AN ENGLISH VERSION BASED ON SELECTED VERSES



The Mahābhārata

**An English Version Based on
Selected Verses**

by Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan

The *Mahābhārata* is admittedly the longest, and perhaps the greatest, epic poem in any language. According to its reputed author, it was intended to be a treatise on life itself, embracing religion and ethics, polity and government, philosophy and the pursuit of salvation. The shortest recension of the Sanskrit version consists of some 88,000 verses.

The main narrative, however, is the story of the rivalry between the cousins, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, which culminates in the great battle of Kurukṣetra. Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan here presents a prose translation of the verses dealing with this theme.

From their boyhood days, the Kaurava brothers and the five Pāṇḍava brothers vie with each other. Duryodhana, of the Kauravas, attempts to cause the death of his cousins, but fails. Later, when the Pāṇḍavas have built a splendid palace and held a great sacrifice to celebrate the coronation of Yudhiṣṭhira as their king, the jealous Duryodhana, on the advice of his uncle, challenges the Pāṇḍavas to games of dice. As a result, the losing Pāṇḍavas must spend twelve years in exile and another year living incognito. At the end of this period the Pāṇḍavas attempt to reclaim their lost kingdom by peaceful means. When these fail, the Pāṇḍavas and Kaurava-

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The Mahābhārata

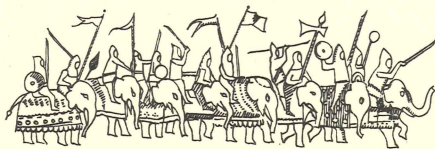
AN ENGLISH VERSION BASED ON SELECTED VERSES

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The Mahābhārata

AN ENGLISH VERSION BASED ON SELECTED VERSES



CHAKRAVARTHI V. NARASIMHAN

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*Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan is Under-Secretary for
General Assembly Affairs and Chef de Cabinet to the
Secretary-General of the United Nations.*

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Table of Contents

Preface	vii
Guide to Pronunciation	xi
Introduction	xv
Ādi Parva (Chapters I–XIX)	I
Sabhā Parva (XX–XXIV)	44
Āraṇyaka Parva (XXV–XXIX)	58
Virāṭa Parva (XXX–XXXIV)	72
Udyoga Parva (XXXV–XLVII)	89
Bhīṣma Parva (XLVIII–LVIII)	121
Droṇa Parva (LIX–LXVI)	142
Karṇa Parva (LXVII–LXIX)	160
Śalya Parva (LXX–LXXXVI)	167
Sauptika Parva (LXXVII–LXXX)	179
Strī Parva (LXXXI–LXXXIII)	186
Śānti Parva (LXXXIV)	190
Anuśāsana Parva (LXXXV)	193
Aśvamedha Parva (LXXXVI–LXXXVII)	195
Āśramavāsika Parva (LXXXVIII–XC)	198
Mausāla Parva (XCI–XCIII)	203

Mahāprasthānika Parva (XCIV-XCV)	207
Svarga-Ārohaṇika Parva (XCVI-XCIX)	211
Genealogical Tables	217
Glossary	219
List of Alternative Names	235
Index of Verses on Which English Version Is Based	239

vas meet in battle on the historic plain of Kurukṣetra. After eighteen days of fighting, only Duryodhana, of the Kauravas, is still alive, and he is then slain in single combat. A midnight massacre by supporters of Duryodhana reduces the surviving Pāṇḍava forces to the five brothers, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who in mortal form has been their ally, and Sāt̥yaki, one of his kinsmen.

Some forty years later Lord Kṛṣṇa chooses to leave the world, and the Pāṇḍavas too decide to conclude their earthly existence. In Heaven, at last, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas are reconciled.

From palace to forest, from council chamber to battlefield, the story moves in a series of scenes peopled by heroes whose frailties are revealed along with their greatness. The concluding battle, which begins with agreements on a code of fair fighting, mounts to an intensity in which this code is forgotten. In spite of its many episodes of weakness, violence, and revenge, however, peace and reconciliation are the essential theme of the epic. Mr. Narasimhan's version of the central narrative of the *Mahābhārata* makes available to the Western reader its universal lesson:

"In all cases, war is evil. Who that strikes is not struck in return? Victory and defeat, O Kṛṣṇa, are the same to one who is killed. Defeat is not very much better than death, I think; but he whose side gains victory also surely suffers some loss."

Mr. Narasimhan has provided a glossary of persons, places, and transliterated Sanskrit words, as well as five genealogical tables which show the relationship of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. He has also furnished an index of chapters and verses correlated to the original Sanskrit text.

Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan is Under-Secretary for General Assembly Affairs and Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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